



## Early Journal Content on JSTOR, Free to Anyone in the World

This article is one of nearly 500,000 scholarly works digitized and made freely available to everyone in the world by JSTOR.

Known as the Early Journal Content, this set of works include research articles, news, letters, and other writings published in more than 200 of the oldest leading academic journals. The works date from the mid-seventeenth to the early twentieth centuries.

We encourage people to read and share the Early Journal Content openly and to tell others that this resource exists. People may post this content online or redistribute in any way for non-commercial purposes.

Read more about Early Journal Content at <http://about.jstor.org/participate-jstor/individuals/early-journal-content>.

JSTOR is a digital library of academic journals, books, and primary source objects. JSTOR helps people discover, use, and build upon a wide range of content through a powerful research and teaching platform, and preserves this content for future generations. JSTOR is part of ITHAKA, a not-for-profit organization that also includes Ithaka S+R and Portico. For more information about JSTOR, please contact [support@jstor.org](mailto:support@jstor.org).

world, the elements of the beautiful are thus presented in new characters, and of a more elevated order. The rigidity of forms characterized by mass and surface, disappears to give place to a graceful freedom of contour, and the straight line no longer encroaches beyond the limits of its inferior position. From this results an infinite variety of objects, the rich details of which are regularly disposed among themselves, but in a thousand different ways. Color is displayed with more striking effect, and especially with more art in the combinations and contrasts of its graduated tints. Motion and sound, although they are not yet the expression of sentiment and free-will, have still quite another sense than in lifeless nature. The swinging of the tree agitated by the wind varies in character, according to its position, and according to the form of its leaves and branches: it is the same with its rustling music, just as if each tree had a vocal organ of its own. It is the union of these elements which gives to plants their individual physiognomy, and stamps their significance as special beauty.

Now, this union is precisely the visible expression of what we have called the idea or the type of each plant, to which idea or type the individuals of each species more or less approach, but from which they cannot recede without being lost. This is what is understood by the term *relative beauty*,—a very important point in an esthetical connection, and one that will frequently occur. The nearer a plant realizes its type, or its ideal, the more it becomes beautiful relatively; and in the same way do we apply the epithet ugly to every individual that remains too far behind the ideal of its species. A proof to what point the fact of the beautiful depends upon a relation to its type is, that every time the harmony of its unity is disturbed, the impression of the beautiful disappears. The beauty of the rose is not that of the lily; the beauty of the oak is not that of the cedar or the palm; and a tree which could affect the forms or the bearing of a different species might appear to us curious, but it certainly would be no longer beautiful. Besides all this, the complete realization of an inferior type better satisfies our esthetic sentiment than an imperfect expression of a superior type, and in this sense a rose may be ugly, and a mushroom beautiful.

If we consider the plant apart from the successive phases of its growth, we shall recognize that the culminating point of its vegetable life is also the moment of its greatest beauty. This moment generally coincides with that of its efflorescence, and in the flower are displayed with the greatest richness, the elegance of form, and the brilliancy of color.

The same fact is demonstrated more fully, when we consider the vegetable kingdom in its aggregate. In relation to the Beautiful, this kingdom is elevated in proportion as the vegetable type, the general idea of the plant, is realized with the greatest power. This kingdom, it is well known, is divided into three great natural classes, distinguished among themselves by successive gradations in the organization of plants. The *acotyledons* (ferns, lichens, etc.) only very imperfectly represent the idea of the plant. Algae, lichens, mosses, mush-

rooms present but simple elementary forms to the eye, scarcely reaching beyond the figures which inorganic Nature also produces. The number of their organs is very limited, the phenomena of efflorescence is entirely wanting, and they sometimes only arrest the mind, through color, the most material, in some respects, of the principles of the Beautiful. It is in this order of productions that we even encounter forms that inspire us with a sort of instinctive repulsion, as among animals of inferior classes. The *monocotyledons cryptogamea*, the brake, the club-moss, already offer forms more developed, and the flowering plants of the same family (*phanerogams*) are, little by little, elevated through the series of grasses and rushes, to the elegant and majestic palm, as well as to the brilliant flowers of the lily tribe, etc. Finally, the noblest plants, those which make the principal ornament of the globe, belong to the *decotyledons*, the most perfect also in the matter of organization. Here are found, combined in the highest degree, the imposing grandeur of the aggregate plant, and the richness of detail, the harmony of form and of color, the majesty of bearing, and the magnificence of the flower. That which constitutes progress from one class to another is, that the general type of the plant becomes, thus to say, always richer in means of expression: its organs, in fact, and through them its forms multiply as it advances, so well that botany has by numbers graduated this progressive series, by showing that the number two and its multiples govern the first class, the number three and its multiples, the second; and finally, that the numbers four and five, with their multiples, represent the highest class.

After these observations in detail, and in order to convey a just idea of the esthetic value of the vegetable kingdom, there still remains the consideration of its distribution over the terrestrial portions of the globe, which it covers everywhere like a magnificent mantle; let us fancy to ourselves what the earth would present to our eyes deprived of this many-colored garment, whose tints are so constantly renewed by its vital forces; and also strive to comprehend and admire the harmony which reigns over the general disposition of form and color, according to their adaptation to the diverse regions and vegetable zones of the planet. Upon this interesting subject Humboldt has published a pamphlet, filled with ingenious and profound suggestions. He remarks, and with reason, that if the characteristic physiognomy of different countries be composed of the union of natural phenomena, of the forms of mountains and clouds, of the degree of atmospheric purity, of the aspect of animal organization, it should not, however, be denied that the principal element of the entire impression it makes is to be found in vegetation. Animal forms have too little mass, and their constant locomotion too often screens them from our sight, whilst the vegetable forms, by their agglomeration and their immovability, act every instant upon the imagination. Humboldt again insists upon the undoubted influence which this surrounding of external Nature exercises upon the moral characteristics of peoples; then he paints with broad touches the various scenes which the different

zones of the earth present, according to the distribution and combination of vegetable forms, arranged by him into sixteen well-characterized groups.

Finally, it must not be forgotten what the vegetable kingdom provides for the domain of Art, in the shape of the elements of the Beautiful. Sculpture and architecture borrow elegant ornaments; painting goes to it as the richest source of the picturesque; and how many brilliant descriptions, how many graceful and grand images the poets of all ages have they not found in the wonders of the kingdom of plants!

And yet the development of natural Beauty does not stop there; it is only in the world of animal forms that it reaches to its most complete expression.

#### THE TOLD AND THE TELLING OF IT.\*

In reading this volume, of some 350 pages, which we have *laboriously* done, we are led at once to ask ourselves, do the things that are told derive any advantage from the way of telling them? Certainly not. Is the substance of them a recompense for the lack of power in the diction? By no means. What, then, is the result? Tiresome stories, told in *classic* commonplace, for such is the designation put upon so palpable imitation of the worst qualities of the properly-designated *classic* poets. How would one of the old Grecian's steeds, harnessed to their heavy chariots, hold way with some of our modern racers in their agile gigs, with spider-leg wheels? A few college professors might think of the Olympian games, and glorious Greece, and burst their button-holes in exultation, but the lightning speed of the racer, with his grace and suppleness of limb, would gain the plaudits of such as can feel themselves grow active in view of the poetry of motion. The modern mind desires to be stirred by exhilaration, and prefers the unstable seat of the whirlwind-gig to the jolting of any lumbering chariot. There is a tension of the nerves required in the former, and nothing but a laxity in the latter.

Precisely analogous is the mental experience in reading the two styles we have endeavored to typify. For instance, in perusing a poem by Longfellow or Tennyson, we find ourselves slipping along so easily, and cheered on by the bravoes of so many way-side happy thoughts, that we reach the goal-end before we are aware of it, and with regret to find it so rapidly attained. In the other case, in reaching the same goal, what perils do we encounter! At stated intervals there are huge stumbling blocks to bounce over, and break up our course with a series of hitches. These impediments come in the shape of clumsy, long-drawn similes, which give you about as vivid an idea of the way of illustrating the nucleus-thought, as the aforesaid tumbling does of the rattling progress of the whirling gig.

Let us take an instance from the first poem in our volume, one entitled *Sohrab and Rustum*, and which we are constrained to believe, for all that there is in it, even our self-trammelled and system-proscribed

\* Poems by MATTHEW ARNOLD. Boston: Ticknor & Co. 1856.

poet himself might have given more effectively in five pages, than in the thirty and more which it occupies. Thus, we would trust Tennyson to give us, in a single expression, more graphicness, than such a poise and suspense possibly admits of, as is consequent on the six lines which are italicized below:

"And Rustom seized his club, which none but he  
Could wield: an unlopp'd trunk it was, and huge,  
Still rough; like those which men in treeless plains,  
To build them boats, fish from the flooded rivers,  
Hyphasis or Hydaspes, when, high up  
By their dark springs, the wind in winter-time  
Has made in Himalayan forests wrack,  
And strewn the channels with torn boughs; so huge  
The club which Rustom lifted now, and struck  
One stroke."

It needs no practised mind to see how the current of thought is completely rifted by useless obstructions in such a simile as that. Compare with this Milton's conciseness, where the object was the same, and to add to which would be to weaken, in proportion to the irrelevancy of the addition:

"His spear, to equal which the tallest pine  
Hewn in Norwegian hills, to be the mast  
Of some great admiral, were but a wand."

The contrast is striking to show how poets may feel, and how fabricate. Milton wished to impress us with the size of a spear, and this instance, of all others, is felt out. His underling would have told how many strokes it took so many giants to fell it, and how many oxen to draw it, and how many carpenters to have fashioned it, with a full quantity of encumbering epithets. We make no comparison between Milton and such as Matthew Arnold, nor do we place our systemizer in the same light with Tennyson, but only ask of those persons, who fancy they see no ephemeral glitter, but only sterling matter for reflection in these poems, if matter for reflection (thought or glitter), is worthy to be called a poem, but only materials for such.

Our poet has a long preface explaining his poetic predilections, and the system on which he imagines true poetry can only be written, in which he claims that the action of a poem should be the chief thing matured, and the whole so perfected as to produce an effect in itself, rather than in its parts. Let us grant that this may be the prime object of a poem, but we, by no means, allow that it is only to be produced by the studied neglect of effect in the minor details. It is natural for any person of imagination, as he writes, to feel the warmth of his thoughts, and find each new turn of the subject opening scenes to his mind, that he can hardly resist the inclination to describe, when he knows that in revision a chastened skill and scholarly determination will lop all such irrelevant excrescences, and look more to the effect of the whole, than would be possible in the heat and urgency of composition. Remarkable self-denial and strong powers of compensation will enable a few to do this mostly, if not wholly, as they proceed; but it falls to the lot of the most, to be obliged to defer such balances of parts to the revision; and in no case does the want of artistic skill show itself in a poet more than in the existence of such exuberances, after they have been submitted to his

judgment in review. Precisely this does the permanence of such unapposite rendering in the simile we have quoted, prove to us. Take another instance in the same poem:

"For we are all, like swimmers in the sea,  
Poised on the top of a huge wave of Fate,  
Which hangs uncertain to which side to fall,  
And whether it will heave us up to land,  
Or whether it will roll us out to sea;  
Back out to sea, to the deep waves of death,  
We know not, and no search will make us know;  
Only the event will teach us in its hour."

The first three lines are excellent; and the subsequent five, intended for an elucidation, only miss their purpose; and the mind, which has voluntarily grasped at the full meaning from the previous hint, plods wearily through them, while, at least, it ought to have been refreshed with a spirit in the telling. With truly excellent poetry it is always the case that each successive reading brings out new beauties, and undiscovered thoughts; but, with such as this, we are only astounded at what penuriousness there can be in seeming abundance.

To write poetry on a system is like a man dancing in chains, which, although too light and easy to encumber him, always accompany his motions with their clank. Another poem of a similar inanity with the one we have mentioned, and through which the din of the clank is never concealed by any sonorousness of metre, or cadence of verse, or anything like a sympathetic chime between thought and expression, but in which with the regularity of a machine, the tenth syllable chops off the line,—is an episode of Scandinavian Mythology, called *Balder Dead*; which, without any proclivity to the witting's tricks, we are inclined to rename Balder Dash, if style so bold, and without the dash of spirit, can claim so equivocal a title.

We do not again refer to the simile we first quoted, because there is any scarcity of exemplars equally reprehensible, but for the reason that we do not wish to encumber our columns with any more such, and the one in question is a fair sample of his generic faults. In his preface he claims that a representation, which is generally indeterminate and faint, instead of being particular, precise, and firm, is *not* interesting in poetry, that is (to use his definition), does not gratify a natural interest in knowledge of all kinds; which last, we suppose, he means to say is the craving to be satisfied, in those who are presumed to be athirst for poetry. There is poetry in the stars undoubtedly; but the tangible knowledge of Newtonian schemes and Herschell's maps, although, as we have said, matter for poetry, is hardly poetry in itself. So we may learn something new, and a thirst for knowledge in the lumberman may be appeased somewhat in ascertaining Mr. Arnold's authority that the rivers Hyphasis and Hydaspes float down trunks of trees from the Himalayan mountains, and are fished up on the plains to be built into boats; but we opine that such a precise, merchantable account can only divert the mind from Rustom's club, without clearly defining to us its immensity, especially when the wrack of the forest strewn the channels with nothing, as far as we are told, but *torn boughs*. We do not intend to be guilty of hyper-criticism, but

are naturally exacting of a bard who declares, with so much unction, that he is going to be, particular, precise, and firm, and falls unwarily into the opposite of indeterminate, and faints; and that, too, when one poem, because not conformable to his ruling preface, is confessedly rejected from the present edition. The man who will walk the streets professedly only in a bee-line, must expect the crowd to laugh at the slightest dereliction; and the poet who will scorn the examples of Goethe, Byron, Lamartine, and Wordsworth, can expect little favor to his consequent shortcomings. Another requisite for a poetical work, which our systemizer further demands, but unluckily does not exemplify, is, that it shall be a source of enjoyment to the reader, which he conceives is only to be accomplished, by making the poem a continuous action, ignoring all those mental existences in which there is everything to be endured, and nothing to be done. In reply to this there occurs at once to every one a complete refutation in recalling some of the famous criminal monologues and representations of mental being, which have enriched literature from Hamlet to Manfred. Human actions, he says, form the eternal object of Poetry in all nations and times. Primarily it is certainly so, as instanced in the Ballad, that precursor of all literatures; but to confine it to that element in the sequels, would be only to allow Narrative Poetry, to the exclusion of other species, confessedly higher. When the poetic mind rises in the scale of imagination, and delves into the motives of actions, analyzes the subtler kinds of predilection and repugnance, and culminates in the delineation of a great and passionate inner existence, or probes to the quick of sympathy with man the very still-life about us, then what were deceitful actions, the mere moving of limbs? What Mr. Arnold means by *actions* is not precisely evident, for before long we find him certifying that his business is only with the *inward man*; but perhaps he forgot himself; for now he is on another point, and asserting that the date of an action signifies nothing; he claims that the routine of life with *Ædipus* and *Macbeth* is of no concern, only the inward man. We agree to the inward man, without rejecting the other.

Next we have an apology for the Greeks, for their boldness of expression and limitation of range in their tragedy, because, forsooth, the range of excellence in subjects was narrow; and he never mistrusts that the fault may have been in their narrow perception of excellence. It is just as if a modern master of Painting should conceive the exigences of mediæval times belonged to ours, and should never paint anything but an *Ecce Homo*, or a *Madonna*, in some phase or other, as if all pictorial excellence consisted in doubtful legendry, and the dreams of a zealot.

Mr. Arnold has a profound abhorrence of all brilliant things, which arise under the pen as it goes along, which caters only, as he imagines, to the reader's rhetorical sense and curiosity, and not at all to their practical sense. This last is only to be gratified by total-impressions, which most people, he asserts, imagine to be a commonplace of metaphysical criticism! On the contrary, so often do we hear it said of poems and books, *it is told for the telling*, that

we can but think it a natural instinct to judge them primarily by their power of giving total-impressions. Such is certainly the effect most poems produce at the first reading, when we hurry on with the impulse of the story. But for subsequent readings, and that which is to render the poem a household treasure, a pocket companion, a joy for ever, it is these scattered brilliants that light us on our way through it, and as we look back upon it from the goal, serve as the landmarks in the chart of our total-impressions.

Next we have Shakspeare poured into the cauldron of Mr. Arnold's criticism. It was Shakspeare's excellent subjects, and the world afforded no better, such as Macbeth, and Romeo, and Othello, that constituted his fundamental excellences as a poet.—so says our bard. What does Mr. Arnold think of all those hackneyed dramatists before Shakspeare, and from whom he borrowed chiefly his subjects, only to submit them to the impress of his idiosyncrasies,—were they,—having made equally good choice of subjects, because the same,—were they *fundamentally the poets* Shakspeare was? No, it was only that profoundness of single thought, that richness of imagery, that abundance of illustration, which Mr. Arnold affects to despise, that raised him above the former employers of his same subjects. Could there be a greater absurdity in criticism, than that the subject makes the poet? With all his stress upon this matter we may suppose Mr. Arnold has himself chosen the best of subjects; but the reader at once perceives they have failed of his necessary consequence in making him an excellent poet.

What can be the matter with our critic? Not a dozen sentences further on, we find him acknowledging the wonderful gift of expression, such as Shakspeare possessed, to be (we use his words again) the fundamental excellence of poetical art. Can Mr. Arnold draw a distinction between the poet and his art, when the poet's identity as such, lies wholly in his art? 'Tis as if one should say Titian was no painter, because he paid less attention to the drawing than the color, and then assume that color is the fundamental essential of the pictorial art.

There are a few things, critics of Mr. Arnold's stamp will do well to remember; that if we deny all powers of impression but those which will make a total one, we must read a whole poem for a single impulse to the mind, and as impressions that are the effect of a story, generally abide with us, because unconnected with others, a subsequent reading gains us nothing, for there is naught to divert our attention from the goal. It is like a journey on a straight turupike that stretches ahead for miles (and what is stupider?) in preference to the country road, that winds by the abodes of men, and pursues the pleasing varieties of the ground. We like to linger in a poem, as in our travels, and admire the wayside vistas, opening to us new changes of life and phases of nature, which are often much more fraught with interest, more highly poetical than anything that confronts us at our journey's end, when it is impossible, as we look back, to catch those glimpses under trees, and observe the graceful smoke that rises languidly from some embowered cottage.

We have some hopes for Mr. Arnold, when we find what is perhaps the best poem in the volume completely at variance with his critical dogmas. We refer to the *Philomela*, which we have seen frequently quoted in newspaper notices. *Eternal passion! Eternal pain!* Such is its burden, and if not intended for an allegorical representation of a longing soul, certainly answers the description, and nothing in Mr. Arnold's preface so sneeringly calls forth his deprecation, as that "any allegory of the state of one's mind" can be a subject for poetry; but at least the poem in question is wholly destitute of his *pet action*. We are not blinded to some other meritorious passages, mostly in poems quite at variance with his rules; and, in spite of the critic's dislike of verbal criticism, he gives us occasion for it by now and then a happy choice of words or turn of expression, as when he speaks of the wind as "*washing* in the mountain pines." As a bit of Nature-painting, irrespective of its connection with a cumbersome simile, we may quote the following:—

"And as in winter, when the frost breaks up,  
At winter's end, before the spring begins,  
And a warm west wind blows, and a thaw sets in—  
After an hour a dripping sound is heard  
In all the forests, and the soft strewn snow  
Under the trees is dibbled thick with holes.  
And from the boughs the snow loads shuffle down;  
And in fields sloping to the south, dark plots  
Of grass peep out amid surrounding snow,  
And widen, and the peasant's heart is glad."

Take this also for a bed-room picture:

"But they sleep in sheltered rest,  
Like helpless birds in the warm nest,  
On the castle's southern side;  
Where feebly comes the mournful roar  
Of buffeting wind and surging tide  
Through many a room and corridor.  
Full on their window the moon's ray  
Makes their chamber as bright as day;  
It shines upon the blank white walls,  
And on the snowy pillow falls,  
And on two angel-heads doth play,  
Turned to each other:—the eyes close—  
The lashes on the cheeks reposed.  
Round each sweet brow the cap close set,  
Hardly lets peep the golden hair;  
Through the soft opened lips the air  
Scarcely moves the coverlet.  
One little wandering arm is thrown  
At random on the counterpane,  
And often the fingers close in haste,  
As if their baby owner chased  
The butterflies again.  
This stir they have, and this alone;  
But else they are so still."

Some *memorial verses*, occasioned by Wordsworth's death, in 1850, revert to Goethe in this wise:

"When Goethe's death was told, we said—  
Sunk then is Europe's sagest head.  
Physician of the Iron age,  
Goethe has done his pilgrimage.  
He took the suffering human race,  
He read each wound, each weakness clear,  
And struck his finger on the place,  
And said—Thou aildest here and here.  
He looked on Europe's dying hour  
Of fitful dream and feverish power,  
His eye plunged down the weltering strife,  
The turmoil of expiring life;  
He said—*The end is everywhere;*  
*Art still has truth, take refuge there."*

Referring again to Goethe, in another poem, he says:

"Strong was he, with a spirit free  
From mists, and sane and clear;  
Clearer how much! than ours: yet we  
Have a worse course to steer.  
\* \* \* \* \*

"But we, brought forth and reared in hours  
Of change, alarm, surprise—  
What shelter to grow ripe is ours?  
What leisure to grow wise?"

"Like children bathing on the shore,  
Buried a wave beneath,  
The second wave succeeds, before  
We have had time to breathe."

"Too fast we live, too much are tried,  
Too harassed to attain  
Wordsworth's sweet calm, or Goethe's wide  
And luminous view to gain."

## Architecture.

### "OUR BUILDING STONES."

Deeming the nature of materials for building to be one of those subjects about which our "building" community cannot know too much, we give place to the following comments, hoping they will lead to still further discussion. Our correspondents are both intelligent observers, and much interested in the procurement of facts relating to the subject.

I HAVE been very much interested with the series of papers in the CRAYON upon "Our Building Stones." The subject is of the greatest importance to architectural Art, although it seems to have attracted but little notice in this country. Some of our most costly buildings have been constructed seemingly without regard to their constructive material. One sees at every turn costly houses built of a material, and in a manner that we may all live to see fall into undeserved ruin. Indeed, a hundred years, the limit of the natural life of man, is a period which will witness the growth and decay of many of our fairest architectural structures.

My attention has been recalled to this subject, since I first alluded to the comparative worthlessness of Caen stone, by the remarks of your able correspondent, in the last number of the CRAYON, upon the durability of the sandstones in use in this city. His notices of the gravestones in Trinity Church-yard are interesting and significant, but I think he places too much value upon the evidence which they afford. Since reading his comments, I have looked carefully over the churchyard mentioned, and I find as the result of my observations there, as elsewhere, that the limestones are much more durable than the sandstones; I will even venture to assert that this will prove to be the case wherever these two materials are found in the same vicinity. The monument, for instance, in the Trinity yard, of Thomas Cahusac, dated in 1817, is built of a solid quadrangular mass of New Jersey red sandstone, and covered by a thin slab of Westchester white marble—a kind of limestone that has not a very good reputation for durability. But this slab, together with corner pieces of the same material, is in a good state of preservation, while the sandstone block has lost a large amount of its bulk, which has crumbled into powder. The tomb of William Ormstead, which is built in the same